



The International Fancy Guppy Association



Dedicated to Promoting The Fancy Guppy Hobby

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Feeding for The Fully Employed

By Bill Carwile

One of the toughest things for me to manage and still maintain a regular 50 hour plus work week is properly feeding my guppies. I simply am not home long enough nor home at the right times to feed my fish many times each day as is normal for many guppy breeders. Guppy literature is full of references of breeders feeding four, five or even six times each day. That being said, I suspect that the norm is more like three or four times each day, but it is also generally accepted by most breeders that many small feedings daily is better than a few large feedings each day.

I am sure that many of you have struggled with this particular difficulty and each has, in his own way, found a way to work through or around this problem. I employ several strategies in my attempt to work around this juggling act between feeding fish and my various other responsibilities at home. One or more of these strategies may work with your particular schedule and, hopefully, help you to raise better fish.

The first thing that I do a little differently from many is something that I can not take credit for inventing. I stole this from Stan Shubel, or at least took from an article Stan wrote, that I first got the idea (this method is also discussed in Stan's book). This strategy is merely to feed dried or flake food moderately first then go back around to all of the tanks and feed very lightly again to any fish that still really beg for food. The only exception to this is that I try not to feed adult males or males that are older than about five months no more than the single moderate flake food feeding at any of the three flake feedings that I employ each day.

The second thing that I do is to follow each flake food feeding with a fairly heavy feeding of brine shrimp to all fish except for adult males of approximately five months of age or greater. These fish do not really need this heavy feeding as they have already attained most of their body size, and just as important, if I do feed the brine shrimp to the older males, they tend to get chesty when I do and begin to develop problems with fin rot and other symptoms of bacterial infection that come from an inordinately high bacteria count.

The third thing that I do is to add one feeding of beef heart once each week. This food is offered to all fish except for my mature males and I occasionally break down and feed them very lightly with the beef heart along with my other fish.

The beef heart that I feed consists of nothing but plain beef heart along with a small amount of plain gelatin to help hold in the prepared vitamin mixture that I include with the beef heart. I am not sure that the fish are really getting any of the vitamins but I feel that at least I have tried! This single feeding of beef heart each week is always fed at the second feeding on Saturday (usually around 6 PM) to help minimize the water quality deterioration that often takes place in my tanks when I feed this excellent food.

The reason for the timing of this feeding is two fold and pretty simple. And like most of the important things that we do for and to our fish, both are related to water quality. First and foremost is the fact that I always do my water changes on Sunday morning which allows me to quickly get the water quality back to normal after the beef heart.

The second reason is equally simple. Saturday at around 6 PM is the one time of the week that I have the time to dig around in the freezer and find the beef heart and take the time to thaw, chop and mash it until it is the proper consistency for feeding. It is all a matter of timing the feeding to closely precede my regular water changes and having the time to feed something that for me takes a little more time than a normal feeding.

This Saturday night feeding of beef heart is the only feeding all week along that is not followed by a fairly heavy feeding of brine shrimp. Now I know that many breeders raise excellent fish and fish which are bigger than mine with only one feeding of brine shrimp being given to any fish other than the young fry. But for me, including brine shrimp as part of each of the three daily feedings is the only way I have found to feed no more than three times daily and get any consistent size.

I normally feed my guppies three times daily with the first food being offered at about 6 AM just before I leave for work, the second around 6 PM right after I return from work and the third around 9 PM or shortly before I go to bed. My schedule of lighting plays a large part in making this feeding system work for me and I will try to summarize the way I handle each feeding and how my lighting system compliments the feeding schedule in the description which follows.

FIRST FEEDING

Two, four foot long double tube shop lights in the center of my room come on by timer at about 5:30 AM (30 minutes before the first feeding).

This makes the fish awake, active and ready to eat when I quickly come through in the morning with one goal: to feed the fish and get out of there so I will not be late to work!



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The same two lights as above come on by timer at about 4 PM so that the fish are active, swimming and hopefully hungry when I get home around 5:30 to 6 PM and can again feed the guppies.

This second feeding is started with a moderate amount of flake food to all fish except very young fry and males of around 5 months of age. The very young fry get no flake food until they are about a week old and the older males get only a very light feeding of flake food for this second feeding of the day. As always, I go around the room and feed lightly (for a second time) each tank of fish that has cleaned up the first feeding if they are actively begging for more food. This feeding is followed by brine shrimp all around (except older males). End of second feeding.

When I come into the room for this feeding I turn on my other overhead fluorescent lights, effectively doubling the light in the room. This appears to make the fish more active or it seems to me to have this effect. These lights are left on until I complete the third feeding at around 9 PM.

THIRD FEEDING

I feed all fish moderately with flake food. The exception being only a light feeding for the older males (about 5 months and up). Again the older males do not need as much food and not giving it to them helps to keep the water quality high in these tanks, which is always a priority in a guppy tank, especially for the older males. I feed those fish that beg for food another light round of flake food. This is followed by brine shrimp all around (except for older males). End of third feeding.

The extra lights are manually turned off by me as I leave the room for the night, leaving the two, double tube fluorescent light fixtures to be turned off by timer at around 11 PM.

As you can see, I am doing nothing really new or particularly complicated, but there are several principals at play here that I use to maximize the food I can get into my fish in three feedings and I try to make it as painless as possible for me to do so by using timers on my lights.

First, I feed dried flake food at the beginning of each feeding and follow it with brine shrimp after the fish are already full of the flake food. Guppies will always eat brine shrimp, even when they are already full. Also, the flake food, taking longer to digest, will slow down the passage of the brine shrimp through the fishes digestive tract and hopefully allow for a more complete utilization of the nutrients in the brine shrimp. I read this somewhere and do not know that it is true but it does seem logical, and brine shrimp does seem to go through the fishes digestive tract very quickly when fed alone. So I use the feeding sequence of flake food before brine shrimp as a way of counteracting the laxative effect of heavy feedings of live brine shrimp.

Second, I use the lights to make my life less complicated and to put the fish back to sleep during the day. This prevents the fish from burning up calories and reserves of body fat etc. during the rather long period of time between these two feedings necessitated by my work schedule. The bonus to me is the minimal amount of light in the room for most of the day which almost eliminates the algae problem which I used to have. You can't ask for more than that except for a shorter work day, which would let me feed a lesser amount at each feeding and feed more times each day.

Anyone with information on the breeding and raising of Daphnia, White worms, Blood worms, please send to the editor for publication.

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Filtration



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